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REGENTS APPROVE NEW ADMISSION STANDARDS FOR STATE UNIVERSITIES

BATON ROUGE -- The Louisiana Board of Regents for postsecondary education approved today (March 22) a new master plan for all public postsecondary education in Louisiana that will include an admissions standards framework for all state four-year universities.

Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie described the Regents' actions in approving the new plan as "bold" and "unprecedented." The Board of Regents is the state's policy-making and coordinating body for all public postsecondary education in Louisiana.

"The new master plan consists of four parts," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "It creates an admissions criteria framework for all four-year public universities and clearly defines the role, scope and mission of each college and university. It also revises the funding formula for colleges and universities, and sets specific goals, objectives and targets for all public postsecondary education in the state."

The admissions criteria framework stresses, among other factors, a strong college-preparatory high school core curriculum now based on the TOPS core curriculum. The admissions framework also provides institutions, depending upon their mission responsibilities, a combination of other admissions elements including ACT scores, grade-point-average and high school class rank. The Regents expect many institutions and their faculties, with the endorsement of their respective systems boards, to set even higher standards.

"This unprecedented effort to establish a statewide admissions criteria framework has never been done before in Louisiana," Savoie said. "This is about providing greater access through student success. This is not a plan designed to lock students out of the system, instead a concerted effort is being made to set clear expectations early on and to ensure students have the resources to meet their full potential. It is about access for success."

The commissioner said the driving element in this plan is the high school college-preparatory core curriculum. The recent 1999-2000 *Louisiana Department of Education Progress Report* shows that high school students who completed a core curriculum had, on average, ACT scores 3.5 points higher than students who did not complete the core curriculum. A 1999 *U.S. Department of Education* study found that a core curriculum in high school is a chief factor in preparing for college. Academic resources (courses, tests and grades) double the odds that a student will graduate from college. According to the *American College Testing Service*, high school graduates who took the core course work are less likely to require remedial courses and it takes them less time to graduate.

"The Regents' framework," Savoie said, "reflects educational realities in our state, which include one of the highest percentages of illiterate adults in the nation, a shortage of certified teachers, inadequate work skills for today's technological economy, an undercapitalized postsecondary education system, and one of the lowest test scores in the nation for 8th and 9th grade students in math and science. In just five years, these same students will be expected to be at nationally competitive levels just to be admitted into a four-year university."

In addition, Savoie said discussions are underway with Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop aggressive outreach efforts focused on eighth and ninth grade students to provide assistance to those who need additional academic support. These efforts also will identify advanced students who may be ready to begin taking college courses while enrolled in high school.

“Our goal,” Savoie said, “is to create an environment that will help students be more successful once they reach college and to focus the resources of our colleges and universities on their primary missions.”

Savoie said the Regents took this action now to give schools, school boards and next year’s high school freshmen adequate time to prepare for the new admission standards.

The admissions framework creates four selective criteria categories:

Selective I -- high school grade point average (GPA) greater than or equal to 3.0 and completion of TOPS high school core curriculum or an ACT composite score greater than or equal to 25, completion of TOPS core curriculum and a minimum 2.0 GPA.

Selective II -- high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.5 and completion of the TOPS high school core curriculum or an ACT composite score greater than or equal to 23, completion of TOPS core curriculum and a minimum 2.0 GPA.

Selective III -- high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.0 and completion of the TOPS high school core curriculum or an ACT composite score greater than or equal to 20 and completion of TOPS core curriculum.

Open Admissions -- Two year community colleges and technical college campuses. In addition, the 1994 Louisiana “Desegregation Settlement Agreement” between the U.S. District Court and the state requires Southern University-New Orleans and Grambling to maintain their open admissions status until 2006.

The Settlement Agreement, as it is generally called, also states “each institution with admissions criteria shall have 15 percent of its entering class set aside for admissions exceptions. Ten percent shall be used for admitting other race students. The remaining 5 percent is available for other institutional interest students such as athletes, students with other talents, and children of alumni.”

Students not meeting these requirements could attend the state’s open-admissions community and technical college campuses for associate degrees, work-skills training, college remedial education or to prepare themselves to enter a four-year institution at a later date.

The commissioner also emphasized that if this plan is to be successful, the state must continue to expand the new community and technical college system. “If the master plan is to work,” he said, “community college services must be expanded into areas of the state now under served. They will be the first point of access for many students who do not meet admissions standards or who might prefer to obtain associate degrees. The Board of Regents is working diligently to provide community college services with existing assets through partnerships among our universities, community and technical colleges while minimizing state financial obligations.”
